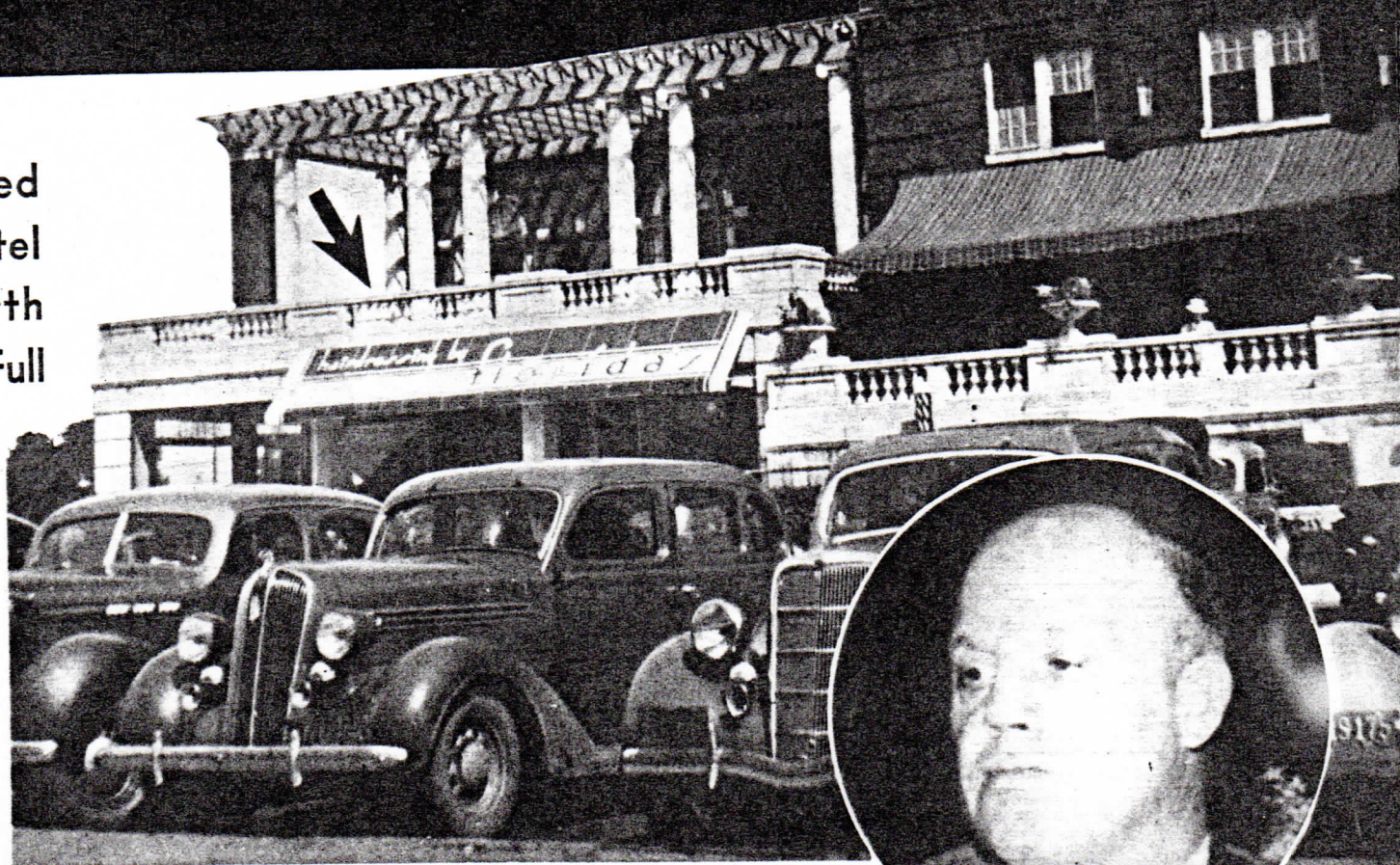


The RAPIST MURDER of CO-ED CLEVINGER

The Crime That Rocked the Nation, in a Hotel at Asheville, North Carolina, Is Told in Full

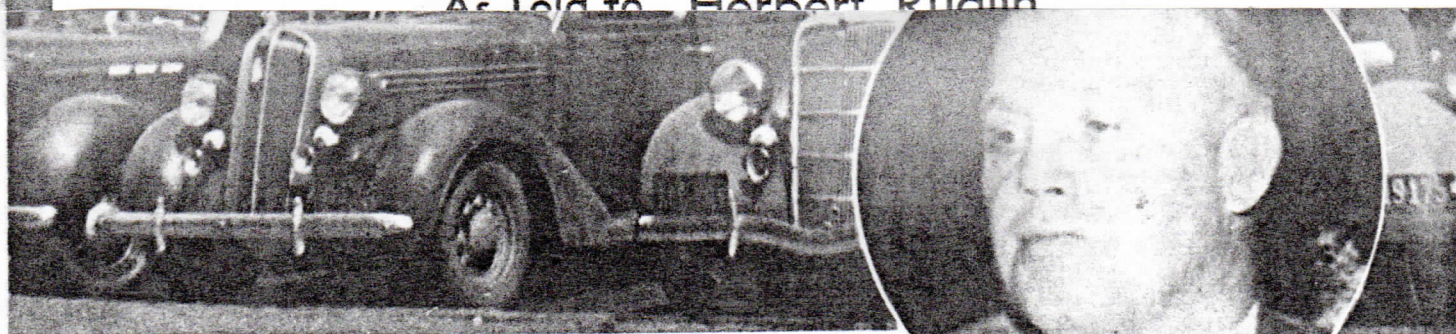
Pretty Helen Clevenger, New York University student, as she looked before she began her fatal trip through the South



The wing of the Hotel where Helen stayed. Arrow points to the railing her killer was seen scaling and, right, her uncle, W. L. Clevenger

By Deputy Sheriffs Love Gudger and Tom K. Brown

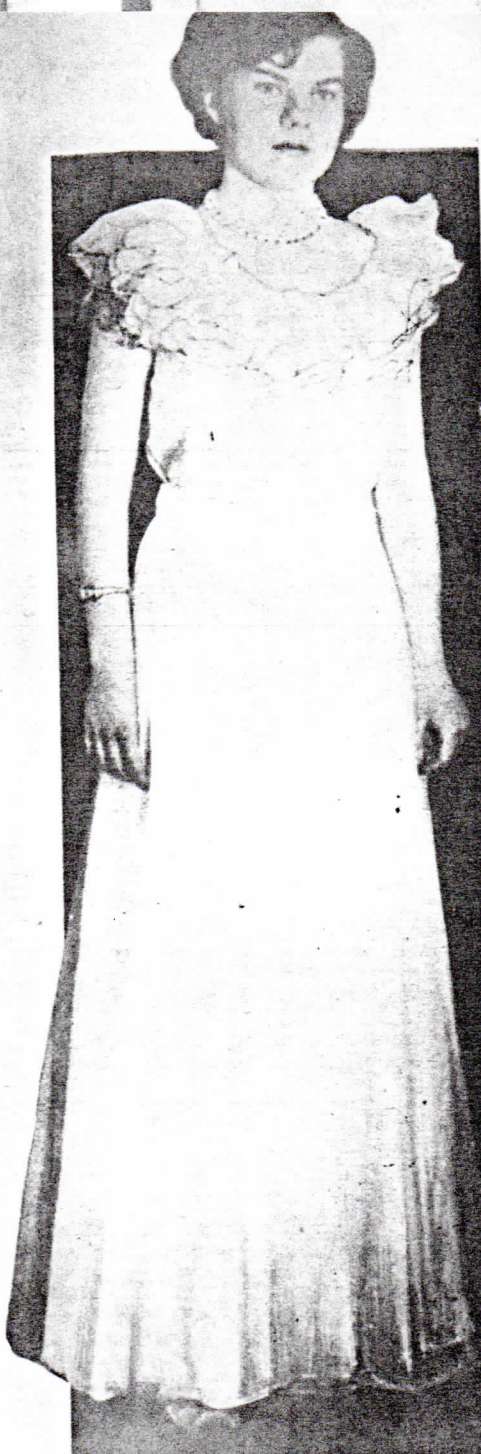
As Told to Herbert Rudlin



The wing of the Hotel where Helen stayed. Arrow points to the railing her killer was seen scaling and, right, her uncle, W. L. Clevenger

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As Told to Herbert Rudlin



BLINDING fingers of blue lightning stabbed across the heavens. Thunder rolled down from the Smoky Mountains and exploded with a deafening, catapultic crescendo of fury. Sheets of rain poured off the sides of houses and buildings and merged with muddy torrents sweeping along the gutters. Asheville, North Carolina, famous mountain resort town, was experiencing one of the worst storms in its history.

Over at the fashionable Battery Park Hotel, mecca for hundreds of Summer visitors, a boyishly slim, attractive young girl arose from the mahogany writing desk in Room 224. For a moment she watched the flashes of lightning streaking down the mountainsides, shimmering and dancing through the window's veil of rain. Then she dropped upon the edge of the bed and commenced thumbing a magazine.

It was a few minutes before one o'clock, the night of July 16, 1936.

Suddenly the girl heard a faint click at the door-lock. She cast a swift glance toward the door.

Startled, she saw the inner key tremble and move slightly.

Then slowly, noiselessly, the door-knob began to turn.

Her heart began to pound in sudden, bewildering fright as the girl gripped the edge of the bed and watched.

The door opened slightly, then the rift became wider. A man stepped quickly inside, loomed darkly in the shadows at the end of the room. The black, ugly snout of an automatic pointed straight towards her...

Terrified, the girl jumped from the bed and ran toward the telephone. The gun jerked forward menacingly. The girl screamed—a scream that slithered off into a choking, pitiful sigh as hot lead tore into her breast.

AT 8:30 o'clock in the morning, Professor W. L. Clevenger, dairy expert and a member of the North Carolina State College faculty, knocked on the door of Room 224. There was no answer.

"Helen!" he called in a low tone, so as not to disturb other guests. Still no answer.

Puzzled, the Professor shook the door-knob. The door swung open, thumped against an obstruction on the floor.

Professor Clevenger looked down... Cold, clammy sweat sprang into being in his ashen face at what he saw. His lips moved in speechless horror.

On the carpeted floor sprawled the mangled, mutilated body of the young girl. Great splotches of crimson saturated her sheer green pajamas. Horrible cuts, gashes, and welts over her breast and face had let loose streams of gore which had stained the rug and crept into her hair.

His first moment of mumbling horror passed, he let loose a screaming sob.

Harry Laetch, hotel carpenter, hearing, came on the run from the opposite end of the corridor.

"What's the trouble?" he demanded. "Go look in there and see what they've done to her!" the Professor barely whispered through stark lips.

Laetch looked in the room and saw the mutilated body of the girl. Crowding down his racing emotions he immediately ran into a room across the hall and telephoned the manager's office.

In a few minutes Ray McComas, assistant manager, had come up to witness the gruesome scene. He telephoned news of the terrible murder to Pat Branch, manager of the Battery Park Hotel. Branch hastened to call the house physician, Doctor D. M. Buck.

Vainly Doctor Buck endeavored to

reach the coroner, Doctor George F. Baier. Doctor Buck and Manager Branch finally called the sheriff's office.

Receiving the call at 9:55 that morning, we left word for Sheriff Laurence Brown and rushed to the hotel with Deputy L. T. Sluder.

Upon arriving at the scene we learned that the pitiful victim of Asheville's brutal crime was Helen Clevenger, 18-year-old niece of Professor Clevenger. The young girl, whose home was in Staten Island, New York, had been vacationing with her uncle after a year's study at New York University. Now, a cold-blooded fiend had clubbed her to death in a heartless ferocity which was to shock the world.

Within Room 224 the body lay on its back near the bathroom entrance, the feet and legs doubled back in a manner which indicated that the girl had been on her knees when she gasped out her last breath.

A few minutes following our arrival, Sheriff Laurence Brown, Solicitor Zeb V. Nettles, and finger-print expert Paul Garrison stepped into the room. Garrison immediately went to work.

FOLLOWING him closely in the examination, we saw the girl's wrist-watch lying on an upholstered chair near the head of the bed. Beside the watch a brown metal shade and light bulb, which obviously had been removed from the bed-lamp, were smudged and streaked with blood. Two long crimson welts appeared on the green tapestry of the chair, as if the killer calmly had wiped bloody fingers.

In the outside keyhole of the door we found a master pass-key.

"Can this key unlock a door even

Mark Wollner, internationally known violinist, enmeshed in the investigation through a complicated set of circumstances



amination. The bullet, he said, had passed through the upper part of the left lung, lodged near the spine, and had caused an internal hemorrhage. The gaping wounds and gashes in the girl's disfigured face were caused by a knife or some sharp instrument.

"Is it logical to believe the killer would bring two different kinds of weapons?" we asked him.

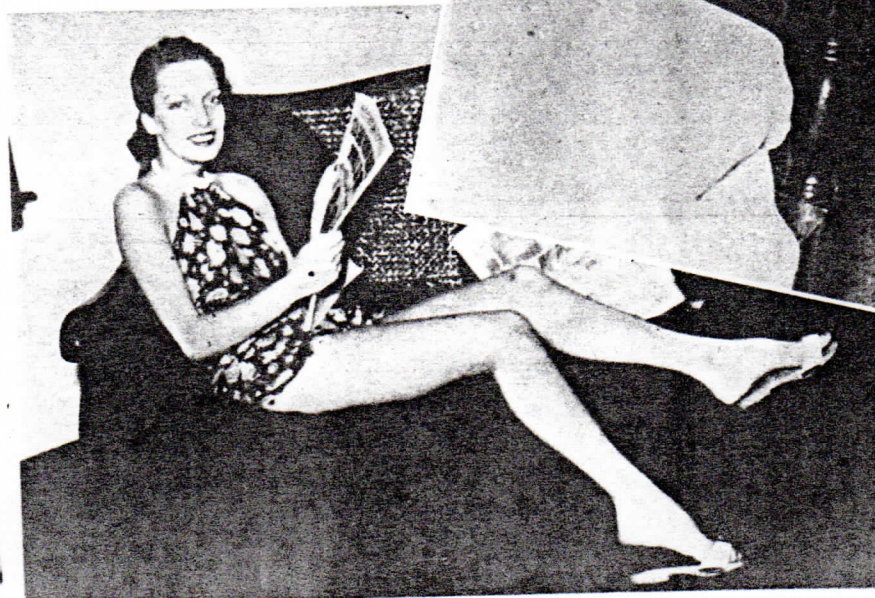
"I don't know about that, but these wounds were made by something as sharp as an icepick," said the Coroner.

"MY IDEA is that he used the clip edge of his gun—see that little curved gash, like a half-moon?" came a rejoinder from the Sheriff.

Proceeding with our intensive examination of the room, we discovered our first tangible clue—a .38 shell of peculiar marking—four lines converging upon the point with three stars forming a semi-circle around the letter "H." The shell evidently had skidded into the bathroom, as the killer had fired close beside the open door.

On the writing desk we found a picture post-card addressed to the girl's parents. With tragic irony the card bore the postscript: "Mother, save these cards. I want to keep them for souvenirs."

In a compartment of the desk we discovered a diary belonging to the girl.



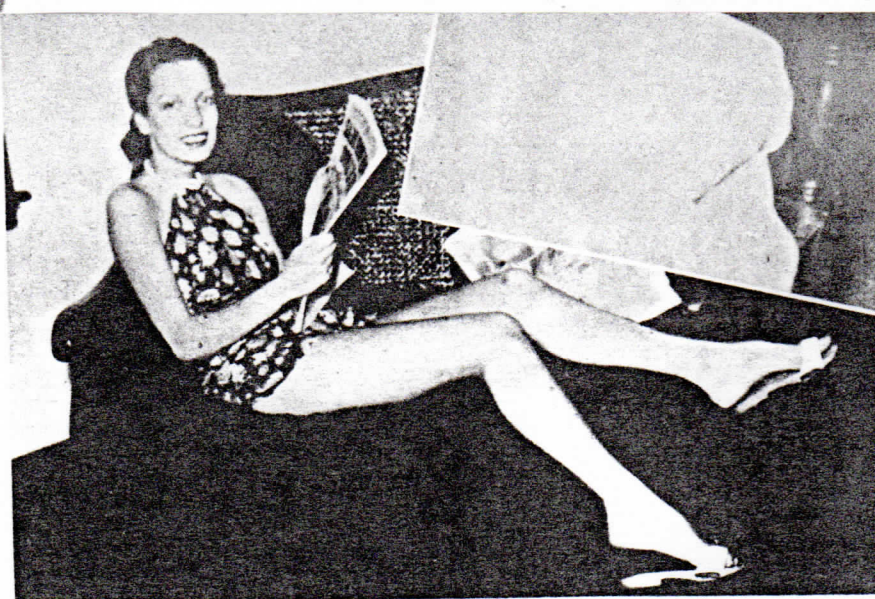
Helen's room at the Battery Park Hotel as investigating officers found it the morning after her cruel murder

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Helen's room at the Battery Park Hotel as investigating officers found it the morning after her cruel murder

Mildred Ward, friend of Mark Wollner, who supported him in every statement he made

if the room key is still in the lock on the inside?" asked Solicitor Nettles of Manager Branch.

"Absolutely," responded Branch.

"Whose is it?" asked Sheriff Brown quickly, holding it in front of the manager.

"I haven't the slightest idea at the moment. We issued eleven of these keys to employees, and it would have to be a matter of checking up to see who this belonged to."

"All right, Garrison, you take it. May be a print or two of value on it. We'll check ownership later," remarked the Sheriff.

Would the mysterious key lead us to a quick solution of the killer's identity? Or had it been merely left in the door during the confusion following discovery of the murder?

Postponing a tap on the key angle, we began an investigation of the death room itself before additional clues should be obliterated.

Coroner Baier, who meanwhile had arrived at the scene, gave us his findings as a result of a preliminary ex-

His face exhibiting keen excitement at the discovery, Sheriff Brown thumbed through the pages.

"She made two entries yesterday," he informed us, "one at 6 o'clock, and the other at 10:30. That proves she was killed after 10:30 last night."

The first entry described the trip she had taken with her uncle into the adjoining county on a dairy inspection. The second entry, composing six lines, told of a visit to the Pegrams, a family residing outside of Asheville and friends of the Professor. The concluding line ended with "enjoyed evening very much—lovely people." Not a single mention of an unknown lover, a secret meeting, a "late date."

IN FACT, as we carefully went through the diary from cover to cover, we were somewhat amazed to discover that the little brown book, archive of a girl's numerous secrets, contained the name of only one man—and he later proved to be simply a long-standing friend of the Clevengers.

Then, as newspapers throughout the world shrieked the news of the brutal crime, we pursued an investigation which quickly unearthed fully a score of clues; in fact, the tragic fate, of Helen Clevenger will go down in crim-

inal detection history as the case which defied solution, not because of an existing dearth of clues, but because of a confusing, maddening abundance.

We found clues galore, clues which in swift, rapid progression pointed an accusing finger of guilt at no less than seven persons. Only one could be guilty of the heinous crime, yet unimpeachable circumstantial evidence directed a stern finger in the direction of all seven—while the real killer stood on the sidelines and laughed!

No less than three persons had seen a man, whom we believed was unquestionably the killer, immediately after the commission of his ghastly crime—yet none of the three could furnish an accurate description.

Durham Jones, Negro bellboy at the hotel, while drinking a lemonade shortly after one o'clock on the fatal morning, had noticed a man slide into the shadows of the manager's office and stoop down beside a desk. His suspicions aroused, Jones went to the desk to inform the clerk. Momentarily looking back, he saw the figure speed through a side door that opened directly upon the veranda.

"I ran to the front of the hotel to see what became of him," Jones told us, "but I couldn't see him. I asked

Casey Jones where he went. Casey hollered, 'You mean that crazy man? There he is! He's going to jump!' And then we both saw him jump. I ran inside to tell Mr. Gaddy, the night watchman. When I found Gaddy the man had gone."

INTERVIEWED, Charles "Casey" Jones, young taxi-driver, corroborated the bellboy's story. "I was talking over the phone to our dispatcher, and saw something like a huge animal crawling around on the porch," he told us. "Then Jones ran out and we both saw him jump and run around the corner of the hotel. I can't describe him, it was dark and raining. But I'll never forget how he ran!"

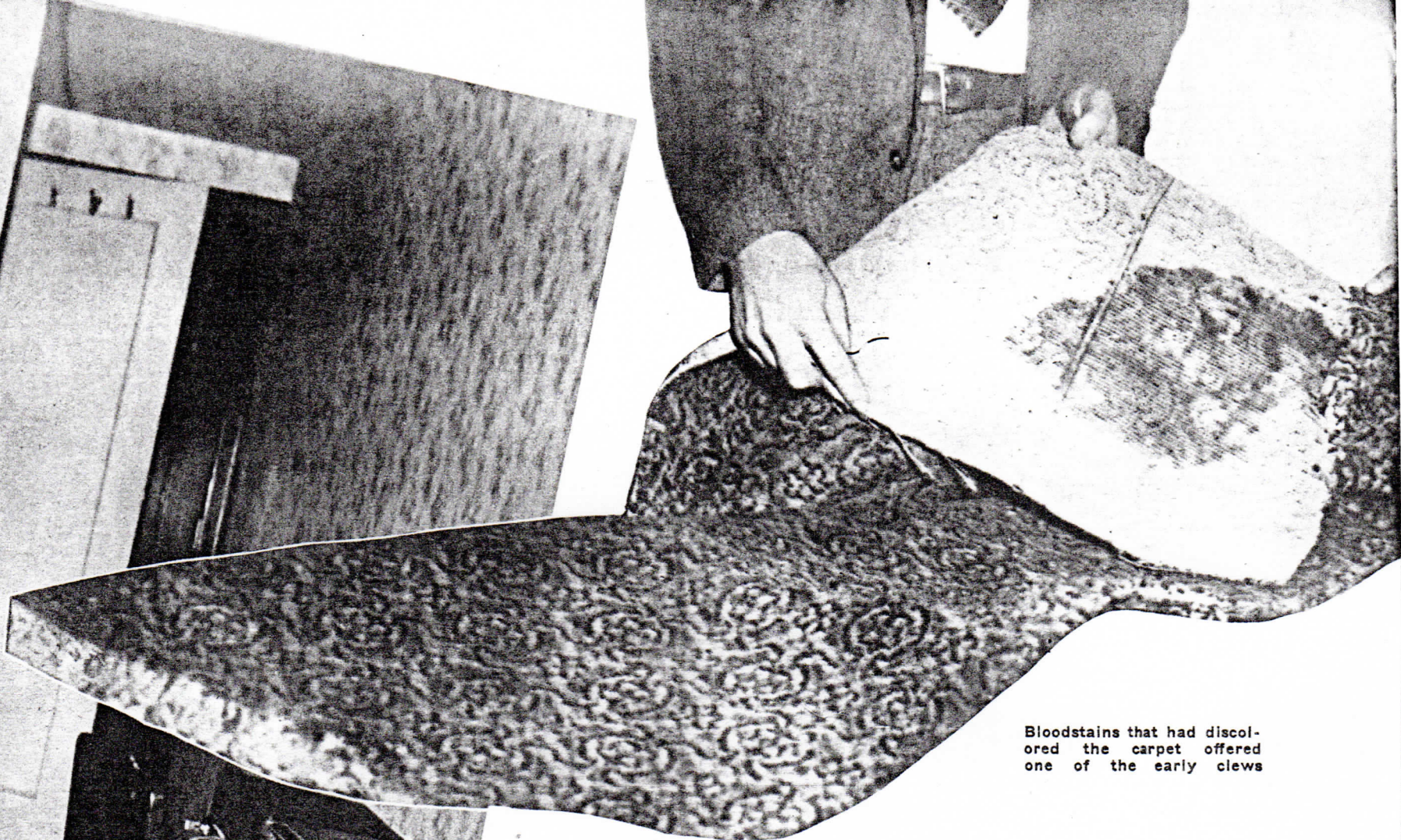
"What do you mean?" we asked him with interest.

"He didn't look like he was exactly running," Jones replied. "It was more or less of a weird glide. Honest it was, Mr. Gudger. He reminded me of a big shadow with long arms on the side of a building."

"Did you notice what he was wearing?"

"Dark clothes. That's all I could see."

Then we moved back to the hotel itself and engaged in an extended



Bloodstains that had discolored the carpet offered one of the early clues



The sheer green pajamas worn by the girl when she met her untimely end

questioning of all occupants of second-floor rooms. Only one person could furnish any illuminating information. That man was E. B. Pittman, an employe of the state banking department. Pittman, who occupied the room directly across from that of the young girl, told us that he had heard several screams in quick succession between 12:45 and 1 o'clock.

"I was in the bathroom brushing my teeth when I heard the screams," Pittman related. "I came out to the hall door, opened it and stuck my head out, but as I wasn't dressed well I turned back."

"You mean you were in your underclothes?"

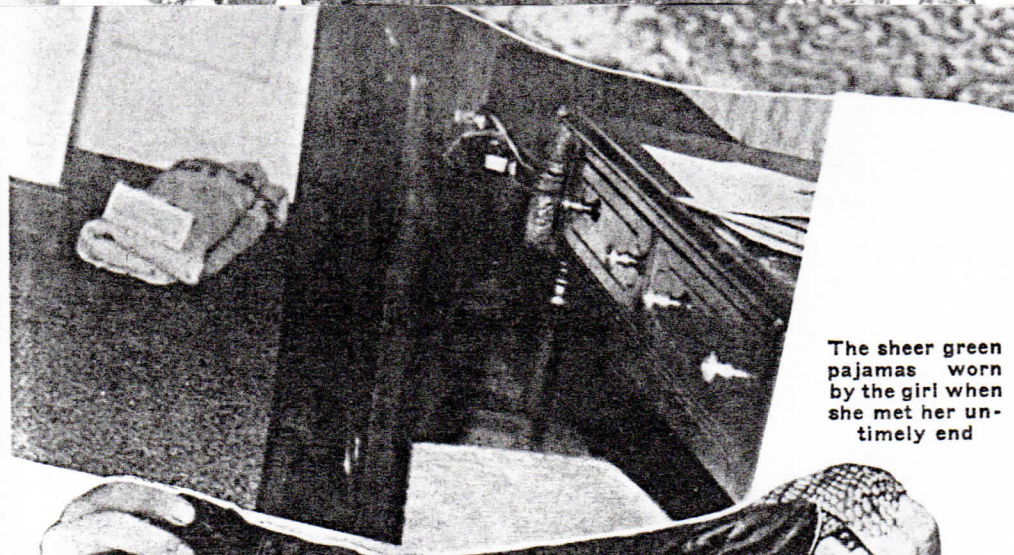
"Exactly. I threw a robe around me and then went back and stood on the threshold, looking up and down the hall. But the screaming had

"No, only about a third of the way." "Did you see merely his face, or his full body?"

"I saw only his shape as he stood in the dark corner of the doorway. He was completely out of the light from the corridor."

Greatly disappointed at Pittman's failure to have observed the killer more closely, we proceeded to the third floor and resumed our questioning of hotel guests. One man, A. L. Curtis, New York businessman, stated he had heard the sound of a heavy blow followed by several sharp cries and groans. Curtis, however, placed the time of the disturbing sounds at 1:50. Two hours later, he said he went down to the lobby to mail a few letters he had written, and inquired of the desk as to the disturbance; but he received a reply that

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"You mean you were in your underclothes?"

"Exactly. I threw a robe around me and then went back and stood on the threshold, looking up and down the hall. But the screaming had stopped, and I heard nothing."

"Did you see anyone?"

"Yes, the figure of a man standing in the darkened doorway opposite me!" came the startling, nerve-tingling reply.

"How did he look?" we shot at him.

"I DON'T know. I wish to Heaven I did," said Pittman. "You see, the light in the room was off. The man stood back beyond the threshold. I had looked to the right of me, down the corridor, trying to learn where the screaming had come from."

"In a sort of soliloquy I said, 'I wonder where that noise is.' The figure in the door said nothing. I looked once more up and down the hall and said: 'It sounds like someone was in pain. I wonder what it could be.' Then the shadow spoke—I was sure it was a man."

"What did he say?" We fairly barked the question at Pittman in our excitement.

"As well as I recall," answered Pittman slowly, as if anxious to give the exact words, "he said, 'that's what I was wondering myself.'"

"What else did he say?"

"Nothing. I thought he was just another guest disturbed by the noise and therefore knew no more than I did. I turned back to my room and went to sleep."

"Was the door to 224 wide open?"

"No, only about a third of the way." "Did you see merely his face, or his full body?"

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Questioning Robert Simpson, the Negro elevator boy, we immediately became convinced that the fleeing killer had been clever enough not to use the lift. Close examination of every inch of stairway, however, failed to reveal blood flecks or pointed evidence that this means of escape was employed.

Hoping that Garrison, our fingerprint expert, might be able to report something of value, we hurried back to headquarters. But Garrison shook his head at our anxious query.

"NOPE, not a single clear print," he reported. "All smudges and smears. I would have given odds of a 100 to 1 I'd find something clear as crystal on the light bulb. But—and I don't know whether he was smart or lucky—he unscrewed the bulb with the circle formed by his thumb and forefinger, not the thumb and finger alone. Didn't touch his finger-tips to the globe at all."

"How about the key found in the door?" we asked.

"No luck there either. I suppose you've already traced it down."

Sheriff Brown shook his head. "Not exactly. The eleven keys originally issued have been found in the posses-

(Continued on Page 44)

shent treatment had been
ory, for he now assured Captain New
that he would tell the whole truth. He
confirmed the facts we already had.

been implicated long before we sent
for him. He admitted the \$1,000 bond
idea was his, adding, "The ten dollar

graphs of movie actresses, done in
colors. The photos proper were not
pasted to the folder, so the guards

Sam Johnson. Al Norman and John
Morris are fictitious.

The Rapist Murder of Co-Ed Clevenger *(Continued from Page 23)*

sion of those they belonged to. This is a twelfth key, and funny as it sounds we can't find out who it belongs to! Branch doesn't know. Neither does the engineer, who made the original eleven."

"Think we'll strike something if we stick to running it down?" queried Deputy Messer.

Again the Sheriff shook his head. "No, I don't," he replied. "Frankly, I think it was left there by a maid or another employe following discovery of the crime. Although no one claims ownership, and all evelen previously issued have been traced, I'm not going to attach too much importance to it unless I have to."

Later, as we questioned Clevenger

and Laetch as to whether they had noted the key in the lock upon discovery of the crime, both men stated they could not recall.

Forgetting the mysterious twelfth key for the time being, we went back to a consideration of the motive for the heartless murder. Although examination of the girl's diary failed to reveal the existence of a secret amour or passionate interlude, of which many girls unhesitatingly confide to their tongueless diaries, we were quick to delve into the theory that a jilted or love-crazed suitor had figured in the atrocious killing. The fact that no evidence had been uncovered to show that the attractive girl had been the object of a criminal attack—examina-

tion proved she had not been raped—did not lessen the belief that the motive of rape had been responsible for the slaying. Her wrist-watch and money were undisturbed, proving that robbery had not been the motive. Had Helen Clevenger recognized the slayer as he stood in the door? Had she known in her fleeting seconds of overwhelming terror whether the man had come to her room in vengeance, hate, or sheer lust—and been killed because she recognized her assailant? Had he really used the mysterious twelfth master key to gain entrance? Or had she inadvertently failed to lock the door and eased the task of the intruder bent on murder?

Endeavoring to gain immediate in-

formation as to the girl's movements, we began extended questioning of Professor Clevenger, the girl's uncle. Apparently overcome with grief and shock, he nevertheless was able to furnish an accurate account of events immediately preceding the tragedy.

Describing in full the details of visits to several North Carolina towns on his route of dairy inspections, in which Helen had accompanied him since July 6, the Professor asserted that not once did he hear her mention a boy's name or express any interest in boys whatsoever.

"When did you first reach Asheville?" Sheriff Brown asked him.

"Friday, July 10. We stopped at the Battery Park."

"What rooms did you have?"
"I was given Room 330; Helen had 324."

Sunday morning, Clevenger went on, he took his niece on a tour of Neuford, Topton, Murphy and Franklin. Tuesday evening he had returned to the Battery Park Hotel and was placed in Room 231. Helen was assigned to Room 224. According to the Professor, Helen had not spoken to any men in the slow hours between dinner and ten o'clock that night, when she returned to her room. Wednesday was devoted to a meeting at Marshall, while the early part of the evening was absorbed by a visit to the Pegrams.

"What time did Helen go up to her room after you returned from the Pegrams?"

"A little after ten o'clock. We went up on the elevator together."

"Did anyone know, outside of your immediate family and her father and mother, where Helen was?"

"Not to my knowledge," the Professor responded.

"Did you have a schedule with reference to coming back here or being here at any certain time?"

"No, Helen did not know from one time to another where we would be."

ALTHOUGH we questioned Clevenger until late Thursday night, we met dismal failure in our effort to uncover the existence of a secret love affair in the slain girl's life.

Meanwhile, Chief of Police W. J. Everett, of the Asheville Police Department, had taken Joe B. Ury, Negro bellhop, into custody. Chief Everett had swung suspicion in the direction of Ury because the Negro had been implicated in a widely publicized affair that had occurred the previous year. Ury, allegedly, had led a salesman to the room of a young woman, who later brought sensational charges against her visitor. Believing the murder of Helen Clevenger might be traced to a similar background, Everett had decided to subject the Negro to an extensive grilling. However, Ury vehemently maintained he knew nothing concerning the murder of the young co-ed.

Following our questioning of Professor Clevenger, we moved the investigation back to the hotel itself. Within two hours we stumbled upon the first of a series of startling discoveries that were destined virtually to choke our case in a network of puzzling and conflicting circumstances.

At the end of the second floor corridor in the hotel we stopped before a time clock. "I guess Gaddy punched this and left before the murderer went to the girl's room," ventured the Sheriff. Daniel Gaddy, the night

part, had taken Joe B. Ury, Negro bellhop, into custody. Chief Everett had swung suspicion in the direction of Ury because the Negro had been implicated in a widely publicized affair that had occurred the previous year. Ury, allegedly, had led a salesman to the room of a young woman, who later brought sensational charges against her visitor. Believing the murder of Helen Clevenger might be traced to a similar background, Everett had decided to subject the Negro to an extensive grilling. However, Ury vehemently maintained he knew nothing concerning the murder of the young co-ed.

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As a matter of routine, Sheriff Brown began to open the clock in order to check the time intervals. Seconds later we stared in almost overwhelming disbelief at a blank strip of paper. Gaddy had failed to punch the clock at 1 o'clock, the established time of the murder!

BROWN quickly turned to us and spoke crisply: "Cover every floor and examine every clock. See if any other has not been punched—and don't skip any."

Within a short space of time we had checked the time clocks and found that the only one Gaddy had failed to punch reposed a few feet from the slain girl's room!

We immediately arrested the watchman and hurried him to the Buncombe County jail. Gaddy, stockily-built, almost bald despite his 29 years, appeared overcome with surprise at his arrest. When we informed him that he had failed to punch the time clock at 1 o'clock on the second floor of the hotel, which immediately placed him in a suspicious light, Gaddy stared at our accusing faces and turned waxen pale. His lips twitched nervously as he attempted to explain the incriminating circumstance.

"I don't know why I failed to punch it," he said. "I have been worrying

a great deal about financial matters. I guess I simply overlooked it."

"You realize that sounds mighty weak," remarked the Sheriff.

"Yes, I do. I just can't understand why I failed to punch it."

"Have you your key ring with you?" queried Brown.

"Yes, here it is."

ONLY the clink of the keys disturbed the heavy silence of the room as the Sheriff examined each one. Suddenly he leaned forward in his chair and held out a key in front of Gaddy.

"This key will open 224, won't it?" he shot out.

Gaddy looked at the key and nodded his head.

"You see it's partly broken, don't you?"

"Yes," replied Gaddy through dry lips. "Well—I damaged it while trying to get into a vacant house I was thinking about renting."

Once more open disbelief appeared in the Sheriff's face. But despite a lengthy grilling, the watchman persistently denied any guilty knowledge of the crime.

Remanding Gaddy to jail, we plunged into the task of sorting out promising clues that might be buried beneath a veritable horde of reports and rumors which had engulfed our office. Some of the rumors were obviously the run of the mine from crack-pots, and yet some seemed to be deserving of immediate notice.

One of the most startling bits of information picked up revolved around Mark Wollner, internationally known violinist who had taken up residence in Asheville. According to a witness, Wollner had remarked Wednesday afternoon: "I've got a date tonight with a girl at the Battery Park I met two days ago. Guess I'll have to get a lot of wine."

Immediately we pricked up our ears. Could Wollner have referred to Helen Clevenger—who had already arrived in town? Could the impressionable young girl have capitulated to the well-known violinist's charms and given him a date, unknowing to her uncle?

BELIEVING the circumstances surrounding the Wollner information too remarkable in co-incidence to overlook, we immediately began checking the angles.

The first step was to question Wollner. Sheriff Brown ordered us to pick him up. We found him late Saturday night at the home of friends. Taken back to the Sheriff's office, the dapper, well-dressed, 35-year-old violinist scoffed at our suspicions.

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"I don't know a thing about who murdered that girl," he declared in a heavy Teutonic accent. "I had nothing at all to do with it. Why, I've never laid eyes on her."

"Did you have a date on Wednesday night, the night of the murder?" we asked him.

"No, I did not!" he quickly declared.

"Yet we have a witness who asserts you told him that you had a date Wednesday night with a girl at the Battery Park. Did you make such a remark?"

"I can't remember ever having said that," the musician replied.

"Then what did you do Wednesday night?" interposed Sheriff Brown.

"I went home early, about 9:30 I believe. I talked to Mildred Ward until about 11, when I went to bed. I stayed in bed until 8 o'clock the next morning."

Wollner, it developed, roomed with Mrs. Essie Ward at No. 14 Starnes Avenue. Mildred Ward, he explained, was the daughter of Mrs. Ward and a good friend of his.

Placing the musician in a cell, we hurried to the Ward home. Mildred Ward, a frail, delicate-looking brunette of nineteen, corroborated Wollner's alibi in every particular.

But within an hour after Mildred Ward's corroboration of the violinist's alibi, we received startling information from a girl witness who asserted she had seen Mark Wollner walking the streets at 2 o'clock in the morning!

The girl was positive in her identification.

We believed that if Wollner really had been walking along the streets, other witnesses could have spotted him; so we commenced an extended canvass that led to amazing results.

By 5 o'clock Sunday afternoon we had uncovered three additional witnesses who had seen Wollner on the fatal night. A cafe employee asserted Wollner had eaten dinner at his place from 9 p.m. to 10 p.m. At 6 o'clock in the morning Charles English, 19-year-old youth, had noticed the violinist drinking coffee in a lunchroom. At 6:30 o'clock, thirty minutes later, Miss Lavada Whitaker and Mrs. Ray Baker, residing next door to the Wards, asserted they saw Wollner enter the home.

"When I saw him come home at that time, he walked as though his leg hurt," Miss Whitaker told us. "He knocked on the window of Miss Ward's room and then went up the back steps. Around 11 o'clock I saw Mr. Wollner and Miss Ward come onto the back porch. Miss Ward tried to keep him from leaving, but he broke away. He was carrying a pair of trousers under his arm. When he reached the street he got in an automobile with a woman driver."

FOUR reliable witnesses who gave the lie to Wollner's alibi! Was his alibi a pure concoction to avoid suspicion? Had Mildred Ward been told to corroborate his story? Or was the man wholly innocent despite the damaging statements of witnesses?

Placing Miss Ward in a room in the matron's quarters, we summoned Doctor Howard L. Sumner, the county physician. Thirty minutes after his arrival at the jail he emerged from Wollner's cell with news that fairly stunned us.

An examination of Wollner's left foot had revealed a fresh cut across the toes, and a bruised heel!

Had he sustained these injuries in leaping the balustrade of the veranda?

Grilled for hours, Wollner stuck to his alibi and persistently denied having any knowledge of the crime. Nevertheless circumstantial evidence was too strong, too blatant. We decided to hold him incommunicado in the county jail.

The newspapers carried the account of Professor Clevenger being held by Sheriff Brown. Here for the first time in print is being disclosed what was behind that move: Clevenger insisted, over and over, that he never kissed or fondled his niece, and that always he took a room far removed from hers. Clevenger repeated this so often that Sheriff Brown's suspicions were

man wholly innocent despite the damaging statements of witnesses? Placing Miss Ward in a room in the matron's quarters, we summoned Doctor Howard L. Sumner, the county physician. Thirty minutes after his arrival at the jail he emerged from Wollner's cell with news that fairly stunned us.

An examination of Wollner's left foot had revealed a fresh cut across the toes, and a bruised heel!

Had he sustained these injuries in leaping the balustrade of the veranda?

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Professor Clevenger's brother, another professor at State College, had his attorneys ready to spring him with a writ of habeas corpus. Sheriff Brown knew they could do this and so retard or muddle his investigation, so he went to Clevenger's cell and told him that if he left the county jail, the city police would pounce upon him; and advised him therefore to remain in the county jail until guilt or innocence was definitely established. The Professor complied. No one was more relieved than Sheriff Brown when the close investigation completely exonerated Clevenger, and he was released from custody.

Proceeding back to the hotel to learn if any of the employees had observed Wollner within the hotel on the fatal night, we ran smack into a nest of suspicion and conflicting testimony that placed two additional suspects in the picture and caused us momentarily to forget Wollner. One of the Negro employees approached us and haltingly whispered that before the murder of Helen Clevenger, he had been puzzled by the fact that L. D. Roddy, elevator operator, had taken Edward Fleming, bellboy, to the second floor on two trips. Both had remained upstairs for some time. The second time Fleming had returned with a bundle of clothes

under his arm and hurried out of the hotel.

Immediately we took Roddy and Fleming into custody and questioned them. Both denied having made any trips together to the second floor or to the vicinity of Miss Clevenger's room. Again and again we grilled them, but without success. Fleming, in particular, we felt positive was lying. His heated protestations rang hollow. Roddy, whom we learned had watched the girl several times from the elevator, scowlingly denied ever having seen the girl. Were the two lying in sheer fright—or were they implicated in some manner? Believing they would be more truthful after cooling off in a cell, we locked them in the county jail.

Meanwhile the days went by as we questioned witness after witness in a relentless effort to learn just where our five suspects fitted into the crime picture. Mark Wollner, Mildred Ward, Daniel Gaddy, Rodney, Fleming—

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which of the five held the key to the
baffling mystery?

On Wednesday, a week after the
murder, Police Chief Everett came to
our office and informed us that a care-
ful investigation by his department
had disclosed the fact that witnesses
who had testified having seen Wollner
at various hours of the murder night,
had been mistaken.

"How is that?" queried Sheriff
Brown.

"I mean that we questioned all of
the witnesses who saw Wollner, and
they admit they confused Wednesday
night with Thursday night. Now, if
Mildred Ward admits Wollner came in
early Friday morning, then that will
just about prove the confusion of those
witnesses, won't it?"

"I guess you're right," agreed the
Sheriff. "Let's question Mildred again."

Hurrying to the room where the girl
was confined, we asked her point-
blank if Wollner had remained out all
night during the week of the murder.

"YES," she replied, "Mark stayed
out all night Thursday."

"What time did he come in?"

"As nearly as I can remember, about
6 o'clock Friday morning. I talked
with him."

"Then you still maintain Mark was
at home all of Wednesday night?"

"Certainly," she replied quietly.

Determined to prove our error con-
clusively, if error it was, we back-
tracked on all the witnesses who de-
clared having seen Wollner at various
times on the fatal night. Each ad-
mitted they had confused the days,
that they had seen Wollner on Thurs-
day night and not Wednesday. Con-
vinced of our mistake, and equally
convinced that Wollner's alibi cleared
him of all suspicion, Sheriff Brown or-
dered the violinist and Mildred Ward
released.

Late that same afternoon another
unexpected development occurred.
Fleming and Roddy had sent word by
the jailer that they wished to see
Sheriff Brown. The Sheriff hurried to
their cell.

"What do you have to say, Fleming?"
"Sheriff, I lied about not going to
that second floor. I did go, but I went
up there when the girl was on her first
trip here, and she was on the third
floor then."

"What did you go up on the second
floor for?"

"To get some suits to have cleaned
and pressed for one of the guests. I
took them to the cleaners myself. You
can find out the truth of that by asking
them over at the cleaners."

RETURNING to his office where we
were waiting, Sheriff Brown informed us
of his conversation with Fleming.
"And I really believe he's telling the
truth. Nevertheless, Tom, you and
Love check the cleaners and the guest
registration on the girl's first trip, be-
fore she checked out. Tie them up
and see if the pieces fit."

We departed. The job took us sev-
eral hours, but finally we had collected
sufficient proof to indicate that Flem-
ing's mysterious trips to the second
floor had really occurred during the
girl's first visit, and that his object had
been to take two suits of clothes to a
local cleaners. Result: First Fleming,
and then Roddy, were released from
prison, leaving us with one lone sus-
pect—Daniel Gaddy, the nervous
night-watchman.

"And Gaddy, I believe, is also inno-
cent of the crime itself," Sheriff Brown
opined as we conferred in his office
late that night. "But I'm convinced he
hasn't told us everything as to just
what happened the night of the mur-
der. He's holding something back."

But despite questioning after ques-
tioning, Gaddy stuck to his previous
story and insisted he had given us
every bit of information he possessed.
The case trundled almost to a stand-
still. We felt balked and baffled at
every turn. Clues and clues, swarms
of them, that mocked and derided us
and came to naught! Exhaustive
questioning of witness after witness!
Over two hundred people whose every
movement, every word, had to be

tracked down and verified. And we
got exactly nowhere. Despite days
and sleepless nights of intensive inves-
tigation, the brutal murder of Helen
Clevenger was still cloaked in an in-
penetrable, baffling veil of mystery.

JULY merged into August. Sixteen
days of fruitless investigation, mean-
ingless trails, hollow clues had passed.
Long, arduous hours of routine back-
tracking, delving into the histories of
countless suspects, ceaseless shadow-
ing of hotel employees. And we were
as much in the dark as the day when
we first stepped into the blood-
spattered room of the murdered girl.

What was the origin of the myste-
rious twelfth key? Where was the
lethal weapon concealed? Had the
crime been one of passion, revenge;
robbery? What did Gaddy know?
Was the killer still in Asheville or had



Deputy Love Gudger, co-author, who
played a prominent part in bringing
in the killer of Helen Clevenger

he fled thousands of miles away?
Would the fiendish murder of the
young co-ed defy solution forever?
Clamorous questions that restlessly
seethed through our minds as we
vainly fought to batter through the
wall of mystery.

Meanwhile, Walter B. Orr, former
chief of police of Charlotte, North
Carolina, had hurried to Asheville at
the express request of Sheriff Brown.
Orr, lynx-eyed, soft-spoken, erect as a
Uhlman lancer, was one of Carolina's
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most famous officers. Known as an
arch-foe of crime and criminals, Orr
had cracked many a hard case during
a lifetime of crime investigation.

"Listen, fellows," Orr began in that
soft, Southern drawl of his, as fully a
dozen officers gathered on the night of
August 1 in the Sheriff's office, "don't
let me butt into this picture too much,
but if you want me to tell you what I
think, I'll do it."

Followed a chorus of nodded heads
and "go aheads."

"All right. We've been living with
this case too much! Our minds have
been muddled with a hundred and one
clues—all of them worthless. A real
clue might be stuck under our noses
and we might let it pass. Let's forget
everything," Orr advised. "Put the
dead stuff out of your minds and go
right back to the beginning. Durham
Jones, Casey Jones, Pittman—they all
saw the killer. Let's go back and
question them again and again. Some-
where we'll hit something—and it will
mean pay dirt."

BACK we went to Room 224, to spend
hours in microscopic study of every
inch of the room—walls, ceiling, dress-
er drawers, telephone directory.
Nothing.

Then to Durham Jones. Nothing.
Then to Casey Jones. The taxi-driver
could add little to his previous story.

We pleaded. We re-enacted the
scene of the unknown killer in flight in
the dead of night, much to the startle-
ment of passers-by. No rise. The

Joneses shook their heads. They had
told all they knew.

Then we called Pittman, the bank
examiner, back from Raleigh.

"Tell us again, Mr. Pittman, every
movement, every word you spoke,
from the time you heard the scream
until you had closed your door on the
shadow-figure," requested Orr.

Pittman talked. At the end of
thirty minutes we had the same old
story—the scream, the empty hall, the
dark shadow in 224, his remark—

"Were those the exact words of the
mysterious shadow? 'That's what I'm
wondering, too?'" asked the Sheriff.

Pittman hitched forward in his
chair. "I've been thinking about that,"
he said slowly. "He either said, 'that's
what I'm wondering, too,' or, 'it's what
I'm wondering, too.' Anyway, one
word doesn't make a lot of difference,"
laughed the young bank official.

We saw Orr jut that iron-gray head
of his forward, like an eagle about to
swoop.

"A whale of a difference, son—I be-
lieve!" said Orr softly. He shot a
glance at Sheriff Brown. A wordless,
electrifying understanding seemed to
pass between them.

The Sheriff arose. "Then, Mr. Pitt-
man, you are undecided as to which
remark the man made, but you are in-
clined to believe he said: 'it's what
I'm wondering, too.' Is that correct?"

"That's right," nodded Pittman.

"Boys, we're on our way," said
Sheriff Brown, sudden excitement tin-
gling his voice. "We can eliminate
nearly eighty suspects. That leaves us
twenty-six."

Suddenly we understood the excite-
ment that had gripped the Sheriff and
Orr. The killer's identity revolved
around one little word—'it's'! That
was the remark of a Negro—not a
white man! That was one of the pecu-
liarities of the Southern Negro's
speech, the use of "it" where a white
would ordinarily use "that."

Sheriff Brown reached into a draw-
er of his desk, jerked out a well-
thumbed folder. "Here's a list of the
twenty-six Negro employees at the
Battery Park. We'll divide 'em up.
The majority already have been ques-
tioned two and three times, and might
give us the debutante yawn. But
pound 'em. The man who went to
the girl's room that night knew his
way around—and he's got a gun that
will fit the exploded shell we've re-
covered. Pittman's shadow may be
among those twenty-six! If he's not
—well, go ahead now!"

Five days of ceaseless questioning,
interrogating, grilling flew by. Finally
the list of twenty-six narrowed to five
likely suspects around whom several
doubtful circumstances hovered. Three
of the five possessed guns. Careful
checking with the shell recovered from
the bathroom proved conclusively we
were on the wrong track. We let them
go.

THAT left two, Banks Taylor, pantry-
boy, and L. D. Roddy, whom we
previously had held and released.
Gaddy, the watchman, had asserted
Taylor some time ago had shown him a
.32 automatic. Yet Taylor denied ever
having possessed a gun. So did Roddy.
A search of their houses failed to re-
veal the weapons.

At this point Sergeant Thomas Mar-
tin and Detective John J. Quinn, two
crack detectives from New York City
police headquarters, arrived in Ashe-
ville to assist us in the case. Martin,
the man who had been instrumental in
cracking the Nancy Titterton case, ap-
peared like a college professor in huge,
horn-rimmed spectacles. Quinn,
youngish, wavy-haired, appeared to us
like a college freshman. Yet within
forty-eight hours these two sleuths
were to play an important part in
bringing to bay the most hunted killer
in the country.

Together with Sheriff Brown, Dep-
uty Messer, Orr and Solicitor Nettles,
we spent a day in placing every iota
of information in the hands of the
New York detectives, and in restaging
the crime as we visualized it a score
of times.

Saturday night, August 8, we began

hammering anew at Banks Taylor. Finally he admitted ownership of a gun, but asserted he hadn't had the weapon for several weeks. He explained this by saying he had given the automatic to his father, at whose home the gun reposed in a trunk.

Taking Taylor with us, we recovered the gun in short order. It was a .32 automatic all right, but considerably to our disappointment, it contained eight unexploded shells and appeared not to have been fired in a long time. Moreover, a comparison of shells failed to bring out the slightest similarity.

"Taylor lied once and finally told us about this. He may be holding back something else. Let's question him again," suggested Sergeant Martin.

Carrying Taylor back to jail, we began questioning him in relays. No results. Finally, exactly a half-hour before midnight, Taylor grumbled sulkily. "What you worryin' me so much for? Martin Moore got a gun. He got a .32 automatic. Why don't you worry him?"

"How do you know Moore has a .32 automatic?" Sheriff Brown shot at him.

"Cause when that murder happened I told Martin Moore: 'Do you know that girl was shot with an automatic just like yours? I sure am glad I gave mine to my old man.' And then Martin said: 'Yeah, it don't worry me none 'cause I lent mine to Lem Roddy two days before the girl got killed.'"

"Do you know whether Moore really lent his gun to Roddy?"

"Naw, he didn't tell me any more than that, but I think he's lyin'."

"What makes you think Moore is lying?" pursued the Sheriff.

"Cause I ast Roddy before you arrested him and he said he didden get any gun from Martin. I'd rather believe Lem Roddy."

Was Taylor trickily endeavoring to sway suspicion towards Moore and away from Roddy? Had Moore lied to us during a previous questioning in denying he possessed a gun? Were the fingers of all three dipped in incriminating knowledge?

Sheriff Brown arose and reached for his hat. "Let's go after Moore," he said grimly.

Carrying Taylor with us, we sped toward the home of Moore on Hill Street, a few short blocks from the crime scene itself.

A woman answered our knock. Wordlessly we filed by and stepped into a bedroom. Flashlights stabbed through the gloom, pancaked against the walls, and finally merged into a shower of light that fell flush upon the face of a Negro. It was Moore. Blinking his eyes, he suddenly jerked upright in bed.

"Do you know whether Moore really lent his gun to Roddy?"

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"Give me that gun you killed that girl with!" barked Sergeant Martin.

"I ain't got no gun," came the quick reply.

"Come on, boy, tell them the truth," broke in Taylor. "Tell them where that gun is. I done saw you with it."

MOORE stirred restlessly in bed. "All right, I own a gun, but I let it to Roddy," he said.

"Has Roddy got it now?" we asked.

"Naw suh, he gave it back a day after that girl got killed."

"Well, where is it?" asked Martin.

"Wait'll I dress and I'll take you to it. It's outside," he responded.

Feverish with impatience, we watched while the huge, six-foot three-inch Negro, long arms swinging like pendulums from his body, slipped into his clothes. Finally, handcuffed between us, Moore led us outside.

"It's right there under the porch on a rafter," he pointed. Quickly I—Tom Brown—crawled under the porch. The beam from the flashlight fell full upon a snub-nosed automatic lying on a foundation rafter. Taking time to observe whether string or piano wire led from the trigger in a snare, I quickly retrieved the gun and crawled back.

Six flashlights bathed the gun, a .32 Spanish type automatic, in an intense white light. Suddenly excitement, like a onrushing forest fire, swept over us. The gun bore several bloodstains

and two blonde little hairs, like fuzz from a human face!

Five minutes later a ring of officers encircled Moore in the county jail.

But the gigantic hallboy failed to wilt before our barrage of questions. To every query he calmly replied he had lent the gun to Roddy two days before the murder, and Roddy had given it back to him the night after the crime.

At 1:30 o'clock in the morning we went after Roddy, who meanwhile had been released. Brought to the jail the boy denied he had ever borrowed a gun from Moore, and asserted again he knew absolutely nothing about the crime.

Meanwhile, in a room on the fourth floor of the building, several officers were engaged in furious activity. Finally they reported to the Sheriff everything was in readiness. A tell-tale little button was in place.

Handcuffing Taylor and Moore together, we led them into the room on the fourth floor. Roddy, handcuffed alone, was also placed in the room. Orr nonchalantly took a seat in the courtroom adjoining, where he could easily watch the three through an open door. In another nearby room the Sheriff, Quinn, Martin, and ourselves hurriedly clamped on five sets of earphones.

The mumble of voices drifted over the wires. We knew those three couldn't refrain from talking. Suddenly we heard Taylor growl: "Don't be a damn fool. Go ahead and tell them. I know you ain't loaned that gun to Roddy."

THEN Moore's swift, heated reply: "Don't tell me what to do, big boy. I lent that gun to Roddy, I say. I ought to know what I done."

"You're a damn liar!" flung back Roddy. "You ain't ever done no such thing."

"I know he is," said Taylor. "He can't get away with it. Them Sheriffs are going to get him into more trouble than he is now."

"Mind your own business!" grated Moore.

The tirade of heated accusation and counter-accusation went on. Once the trio nearly came to blows, but were quickly separated by Orr, who rushed in from the courtroom next door.

Yet not once did Moore make the semblance of a damaging admission. But his sullen rejoinders became less frequent. Once he lapsed into complete silence for several minutes, ignoring the other two men.

Finally Sergeant Martin jerked off the headphones and stood up. "I think he'll say something now if we go back there. This may keep up until day-

fool. Go ahead and tell them. I know you ain't loaned that gun to Roddy."

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Finally Sergeant Martin jerked off the headphones and stood up. "I think he'll say something now if we go back there. This may keep up until day-

break. Let's look at them again."

We crowded back into the room with the three men.

Martin spoke first: "Listen, the zero hour is here, if you get what I mean. Either one or all three of you will pay for the murder of that girl. Which will it be?"

The three Negroes stared sullenly. Detective Quinn suddenly pointed a finger in the face of the gigantic Moore. "Remember, big fellow, your finger-prints were on the gun and the lamp-shade in the girl's room," he said sharply.

"There was two finger-prints on that gun, and one of them was Roddy's," Moore retorted.

"You're wrong," cut in Orr. "Roddy's finger-prints weren't on the gun. Just yours."

Quinn leaned back against the wall. "Yes, sir, big fellow, those finger-prints kind of gave you away. They always do," he remarked. "Why don't you talk and save yourself a lot of trouble?"

Moore's lips puffed sullenly. Then he looked nervously around the room. Finally he shook those gorillalike shoulders of his and mumbled: "All right, I'll tell you all about it! I shot the girl 'cause I had to! She screamed too much. There won't nothing else for me to do but pull the trigger!"

Three hours later we had the whole story of the shocking crime. Almost

nonchalantly the huge killer described the heartless ferocity in which he clubbed to death the wounded girl.

Relating how he waited in the hotel storage room from 9 o'clock until a quarter of 1 after entering the building through a rear door with his pass key, Moore asserted he reached the second floor unseen by creeping up the back stairs. After trying the doors of Rooms 218 and 219, which he asserted were locked, he crept to the door of 224.

"The door was unlocked," he went on. "I walked into the room about three feet and then the girl asked me what I wanted. I started backing to the door. She got off the bed and started toward me and said: 'I'm going to call the office unless you get out of here.'"

"When she got eighteen inches from me she screamed. Then she screamed again. I shot her. Then I hit her twice in the face with the pistol. She fell to her knees, kind of groaning. I walked around her body and went over to the bed-lamp which was burning, and I took off the shade and globe."

"I started back for the door and the girl was still groaning. I felt for her face and then I hit her three or four times."

"I opened the door and saw a man standing in the doorway across the hall. He asked me if I heard a woman scream. I said I thought I did and was wondering myself what it was. The man then went inside and closed his door. Then I closed the girl's door and ran down the hall to the rear steps."

"I kept close to the wall so I wouldn't be seen, and when I got to the mezzanine floor I cracked the door and looked out to see if anyone was looking. I ran across the mezzanine floor to the ballroom and then to a door that leads to the outside porch. I climbed over the railing, let myself down as far as I could go, and then I dropped to the sidewalk."

"I ran around the corner, and then across a vacant lot next to the little golf course and down Hill Street. I was supposed to go on duty around 4 o'clock, so I walked around to keep from falling asleep and not getting up in time."

We stared in almost disbelief at the batlike killer. He had to walk around to keep from oversleeping! The brutal killing of the girl didn't bother him one whit!

THE bright sunlight of a peaceful Sunday morning streamed through the windows of the room when we finally concluded the task of putting the confession of the murderer in black and white.

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Then, as distant church bells pealed out their mellow summons to worship, we drove the slayer through the streets of Asheville to the Battery Park Hotel, where the towering Negro staged a re-enactment of the murder as hundreds of spectators, sensing what we already knew, gathered in mobs around the hotel.

Showing us exactly which doors he entered, where he sat in the locker-room, how he finally shot and battered the girl to death, Moore calmly rewoke the crime from beginning to end. Like a huge, silent bat, he imitated the noiseless flight he had taken along the halls, through the ballroom, through the manager's office; and finally, how he glided out onto the porch over which he crept and dropped to the ground, fleeing silently into the veil of rain and darkness.

The motive? Moore's confession said "robbery"—yet he did not rob. Steadfastly he maintained that it was robbery. And later he admitted that he stuck to the statement of the robbery motive because he feared mob violence if the truth became known. And the truth was he went into Room 224 to rape. We uncovered the fact that he had been covertly watching the girl's room, from hiding places in the hotel and outside, ever since Helen Clevenger checked into the Battery Park. Her screams prevented the accomplishment of his purpose—before he "had to kill her" and flee for his safety.

Justice moved swiftly to avenge the death of Helen Clevenger. Three days after his imprisonment in a well-guarded cell on the fourteenth floor of the skyscraper courthouse, an indictment for first degree murder was delivered. Exactly a week later, as crowds fought to gain entrance to an already packed courthouse, the bat-killer went on trial in Buncombe County Court.

In a closing, impassioned appeal to the jury, Solicitor Nettles strode before the twelve motionless men and asked: "What would you have done if a child of yours had been killed by a brute like this? . . . Think, gentlemen, if it had been your daughter in that hotel room in the middle of the night when that big man came in! Martin Moore, cold-blooded murderer that he is, must die for his terrible crime!"

Less than an hour after Judge Donald F. Phillips delivered his charge on Saturday afternoon, August 22, the jury filed back into the hot, stifling courtroom with the announcement they had reached a verdict—Guilty of murder in the first degree!

Taking his doom stolidly enough, the slayer listened through heavy-lidded eyes as Judge Phillips sentenced him to die in North Carolina's lethal gas chamber at Raleigh.

A little over two months from the horror-filled night when he coldly pounded a gun in the face of an innocent girl, the bat-killer will pay the supreme penalty for the crime that shocked the world.

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